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FORTUNIES

WASHED

AWAY

"SAM DAVIS:
BOY HERO OF THE SOUTH"

Broadcast No. 2 in the third year
in a series of dramatizations
of better land use

WLW, Cincinnati

May 4, 1940

1:15-1:30 pm

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
DAYTON, OHIO

SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

A typical southern plantation home, shaded by a historic spreading oak tree, looks down over a rolling farm among the Cedar Glades of Rutherford County, Tennessee. Stewart's Creek ripples gently by the lawn. Behind the home, a pathway bordered by row on row of flowers familiar in gardens of the Old South leads to a lilac hedge. A brave man sleeps here -- Sam Davis, Boy Hero of the South.

ORGAN: SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT (gently, and fade)

ANNOUNCER

Sam Davis was born on this farm. His boyhood was carefree and pleasant. The soil on his father's plantation was mellow and fertile. One night in November, 1863, his father and mother were alone in the home...

SOUND: Hoof beats outside, then halt.

CHARLES

Jane! Do you hear that?

JANE

It sounded like a horse.

SOUND: Horse whinnies.

CHARLES

It is! Someone is outside.

JANE

Who can it be...this time of night?

CHARLES

I'll see. Where's my rifle?

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

JANE

Sam! It's Sam!

SAM

Hello, mother. Hello, father.

JANE

My, boy, my boy.

CHARLES

What are you doing home, Sam?

JANE

Oh, what does it matter, as long as he is home.

SAM

I've only a few hours, father. I'm on my way to Alabama, with messages for General Bragg.

JANE

Take off your coat, son...I'll get some hot food.

SAM

Thank you, mother. I need it. We've been getting very little to eat.

CHARLES

Sit down, son. How goes the war?

SAM

It was all right until the winter set in.. Camp life in the mountains has been miserable, with all of the rainy weather.

CHARLES

But what are you doing here?

SAM

I'm no longer with the regiment. I've been assigned to Coleman's Scouts. You've heard of them...General Bragg calls us the "eyes and ears" of the army.

CHARLES

That must be dangerous. But I know you, Sammy my boy. You're brave. And always remember this...be honest, respect God, and don't ever do anything you'd be ashamed of.

SAM

Don't worry about me. How goes it here on the plantation?

CHARLES

I don't know if you can call it farming or not. These are upset times for us all. But, all in all, the crops were as good as could be expected.

SAM

Well, perhaps the war will be over soon, and I can come back and help you. Remember, I'm 21 now.

CHARLES

Yes....21.....and a man.

ORGAN: O, TENNESSEE, FAIR TENNESSEE (Tune of BEAULAH LAND), fading behind announcer....

ANNOUNCER

The fame of Sam Davis was already far flung as he mounted his pony on that midnight ride. But fate struck a cruel blow as he prepared to cross the Tennessee River. Sam Davis never reached General Bragg...for this time, a prisoner, he was brought before General Dodge.

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

DODGE (in kindly tone)

Your name is Davis, I believe.

SAM

It is.

DODGE

And you're one of Coleman's Scouts?

SAM

I am from Tennessee.

DODGE

Come, come, my boy. I know all about you. We found the notes and maps hidden in your boots and saddle seat.

SAM

Then why ask any more questions?

DODGE

Davis, you're a brave lad. I've studied the papers found on your person, and to tell the truth, I'm amazed at their accuracy. Now, you realize that you're in a dangerous position.

SAM

I do. I expect to die.

DODGE

Perhaps there is a way out. Coleman has given us no end of trouble. Now...in your case, suppose we regard you as only a messenger. That is, if you will reveal Coleman's whereabouts. That is, if Coleman gave you these papers.

SAM

I am sorry, sir. I can't do that.

DODGE

But it means your life, young man!

SAM

I understand that.

DODGE

Surely you know that you'll be tried as a spy, and that the evidence will convict you.

SAM (quietly but firmly)

I know, General, I will have to die. But I will not tell where I got the information. There is no power on earth that can make me tell. You are doing your duty as a soldier, and if I have to die, I shall be doing my duty to God and my country.

ORGAN: SWING LOW, SWEET CHARIOT (softly behind announcer)

ANNOUNCER

"Tell me his name and you are free"
The General said, "and I shall see
You safe within the rebel line --
I'd love to save such life as thine."

A tear gleamed down the ranks of blue --
(The bayonets were tipped with dew).
Across the rugged cheek of war
God's angels rolled a teary star,
The boy looked up--'twas this they heard:
"And would you have me break my word?"

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

JANE

What is it, Charles?

CHARLES

Here....the courier just brought a message. It's in Sam's handwriting.

JANE

Then open it, quick! Oh give it here.

SOUND: Letter torn open...

CHARLES

What does it say, Jane? We haven't heard since....

JANE (in horror)

Charles! (reading) Dear Mother: O how painful it is to write you! I have got to die tomorrow -- to be hanged. Mother do not grieve for me. I must bid you goodbye for evermore. Mother, I do not fear to die. Give...my...love to all. Your dear son..Sam.

CHARLES

They can't! They can't...why, Sam's only a boy!

JANE (sobbing)

Oh, Sam...Sam...Sam...

CHARLES

Why, even now, they must be..(fade).

SOUND: Occasional clinking of rifles...

SAM

How much longer, have I, General?

DODGE

Only a few minutes.

SAM

Well...the boys will have to fight their battles without me.

General, will you see that the chaplain gets my overcoat?

DODGE

Of course I will, Sam...Oh, why don't you change your mind? Just give us the information....

SAM (firmly)

I cannot. I would rather die a thousand deaths than betray a friend or be false to duty!

ORGAN: Softly behind announcer....

ANNOUNCER

A tear stood in the General's eye:
"My boy, I hate to see thee die--
Give me the traitor's name--and fly."

Young Davis smiled, as calm and free
As He who walked on Galilee:
"Had I a thousand lives to live
Had I a thousand lives to give,
I'd lose them--nay I'd gladly die
Before I'd live one life, a lie."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

DODGE

Sam, I would rather die myself than execute sentence upon you.

SAM

Never mind, General. You are doing your duty. Thank you for all your kindness.

DODGE

Are you ready?

SAM

Your duty, men. I gave my word.

SOUND: Roll of drums, up to crescendo and out.

ORGAN: Softly behind announcer...

ANNOUNCER

"The birds broke out in sad refrain,
The sunbeams kissed his cheek again--
Then, gathering up their blazing bars,
They shook his name among the stars."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of Sam Davis, Boy Hero of the South. And now, once again we turn to Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Hal Jenkins.

JENKINS

Thanks, _____. There's more to the story, however. The Sam Davis Memorial Home Association has made the boyhood playground of the young hero a shrine of national interest. Around the old home, they have restored the picturesque setting from which his father, Charles Lewis Davis, directed the plantation....

ANNOUNCER

....and that's where soil conservation edges in.

JENKINS

Right. In this community there are today more than 2,500 acres of farmlands that have been replanned for soil conservation. Although most of the land in the old Davis plantation has long since passed into other hands, it is, for the most part, included now under these conservation farming plans.

ANNOUNCER

How about the Memorial Home farm?

JENKINS

I was just coming to that. The State of Tennessee has purchased 150 acres around the old home as a monument to Sam Davis. The Memorial Association operates it, and it's of more than passing interest that a niece of Sam Davis is regent of the Association, and, as such, manager of the farm. Her name is Mrs. Media Davis Sinnott, and, of course, I scarcely need to add that Mrs. Sinnott has a soil conservation plan for her farm.

ANNOUNCER

In what way is the old farm planned and farmed to prevent erosion, Hal?

JENKINS

Well, for years the farm had been rented out and was going downhill from a fertility standpoint. Although soil erosion wasn't especially severe, because the land lies nicely, row-cropping was taking too much from the soil. Among other changes, they will adopt a small grain-meadow type of farming, with a longer rotation. But I wish you could hear Mrs. Sinnott describe the operation of that farm, as she told it to Gene Charles recently. She not only not only knows about conservation farming, but also the history of the countryside. She'll tell you about the oak tree where Sam Davis....(fade)

MRS. SINNOTT (fading in)

He rode up along the creek here and tied his horse to this oak tree. That was the last night his parents ever saw him alive... but I want to tell you about our plans for this farm.

GENE

Is that field yonder the one that goes to alfalfa?

MRS. SINNOTT

Yes, and the one next to it, too. That land's grown so much corn it's just pretty nearly worn out. The Association plans to have a herd of Hereford cattle to utilize the hay and pasture that our new plan will produce.

GENE

How long since any cotton was grown here, Mrs. Sinnott?

MRS. SINNOTT

Quite a long time, I'm sure. I don't know how many years. The soil got too poor. But I grew some cotton over on my place..it made two bales to the acre.

GENE

Yes, and I know why. That cotton was just afraid not to make two bales to the acre. (laughs)

MRS. SINNOTT

I know what you mean...you think once I get an idea in my mind nothing can jar it out. Well, that's a woman's privilege. (more laughter).

GENE

Well, I'm glad to see you're getting to be conservation minded, Mrs. Sinnott. Once you catch the bug, you're likely to be sort of cracked on it.

MRS. SINNOTT

I know it. I know it. I'm catching it myself. Every time I see a little place where the soil is washing I grab a stick and some grass or soil, and start mulching or building a dam. (laughs, then seriously). But I tell you, it's going to be the salvation of these hills around here. We've just farmed them until there isn't anything left. Some of my neighbors said to me, "Why do you want to fool with the CC camp?" Why, listen, I tell them, smart people are the ones who find time to fool with soil conservation. If that isn't being smart, why would so many Rutherford county farmers be doing it? (fade).

ANNOUNCER

Well, Hal, it looks to me as if one more community had hit the soil conservation trail...this time, Rutherford County, Tennessee.

JENKINS

Yes, that same soil that nourished Sam Davis, the Boy Hero of the South, is going to fight back and give this generation and the next and the next a livelihood. If he could look down from his place among the honored Americans and see his people carrying on, I wonder if he might not say, without bitterness: "I gave my life to preserve my State. Now my State will preserve the land of my people."

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Next week, Benton County, Indiana: The Prairie District.

SOUND: Thunder and rain....